

## THE IMPORTANCE OF AVP RESEARCH AND EVALUATIONS

If AVP is to expand into new areas then we must provide quality evaluation of our workshops and our programs. Many people from many AVP groups have asked for quality evaluation or research demonstrating the value and lasting impact of both AVP workshops and AVP programs.

These requests come from both inside AVP and outside AVP and for many purposes.

Sometimes these requests come from prison systems and individual prisons wanting to know if AVP can prove that it has an impact on the participants. Is it successful in changing people's behaviour? How does this happen? Why does the program work? What are the elements of the program that work? And work in different settings. We know that if we could demonstrate our effectiveness with quality research and evaluations more prison doors would be open to us. Effectiveness of the AVP program is the focus for research and evaluations that are occurring in the United States, as 80% of the AVP workshops in the United States are held in prisons. There has been recent successful research showing the dramatic reduction in recidivism from AVP programs in prison. There is now research into why this is happening.

There are many requests coming from education departments and individual schools for effective evaluations and research about AVP programs with youth. So much of education now needs to be evidence based. There are many anecdotal stories from around the world about AVP youth programs that were unable to get established because of the lack of evaluation research on AVP Youth programs. One AVP school program had to be included under the umbrella of Restorative Practices because Restorative Practices had the credibility of a strong research base. There are only a couple of evaluations of AVP programs in schools. This is one of the major needs within AVP throughout the world. Even the educational institutions in the third world are not embracing AVP Youth programs until programs can provide a stronger evidence base.

Within the community workshop area it is sponsoring and funding organisations that are most asking for evidence of the effectiveness of AVP workshops. In my own experience when the fledgling AVP group started in Afghanistan they were told that they were successful in receiving seeding grant because the potential sponsors were able to go onto the international AVP website, see from the website that AVP was a reputable organisation and that there were examples of some research. They did ask for more examples of evaluations and research if they were to continue funding the project.

In our experience participants are also interested in finding out the 'bona fides' of AVP and the evaluations that we can make available for them. It is as though the credibility of our organisation is very dependent on the evidence of our evaluations. One of the senior members of AVP recently dismissed the current range of about twenty pieces of research, as not being of a high enough quality to be able to feature in the promotion of AVP worldwide.

This rings alarm bells for me as this may also be for you. There would be considerable value to AVP internationally if the AVP groups that have the resources to organise research evaluations are able to share their research results with the wider organisation throughout the world.

The AVP International Education Committee Research Working Group is about to start an email discussion group to link together those members of the worldwide AVP community with research experience to support each other with their endeavours to provide quality evaluations of our workshops. This group will also endeavour to collect whatever research has been produced by AVP groups throughout the world.

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